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ABSTRACT

A description of the pre-school program for migrant children in the State of Washington was 1 of 34 papers prepared for the White House Conference on Children (December 1970). The project serves approximately 400 migrant children ranging in age from 1 month to 6 years in 9 day-care centers operated by an organization called Northwest Rural Opportunities. The curriculum is based on Jean Piaget cognitive development learning theory. English as a second language and Mexican American cultural heritage are stressed in the curriculum. The program also stresses inservice training of its professional staff. Procedures used in evaluation are also included, as is a source for further information. (LS)

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Model Programs

Childhood Education

NRO Migrant Child Development Centers

Pasco, Washington

Rural day care centers for pre-school children of migrant farm workers

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
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FOREWORD

This booklet is one of 34 in a series of promising programs on childhood education prepared for the White House Conference on Children, December 1970. The series was written under contract by the American Institutes for Research for the Office of Economic Opportunity, and the Office of Child Development and the Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Within the broad area of childhood education the series includes descriptions of programs on reading and language development, the disadvantaged, preschool education, and special education. In describing a program, each booklet provides details about the purpose; the children reached; specific materials, facilities, and staff involved; and other special features such as community services, parental involvement, and finances. Sources of further information on the programs are also provided.

Children of migrant farm workers lead a gypsy life that many city children might envy, but some things in their lives are not so enviable. Even when both parents work, the family is generally poor; the children often have no good place to live; school attendance is sporadic, and children frequently fail or drop out. In the State of Washington, an organization called Northwest Rural Opportunities (NRO) is working to alleviate these problems of migrant families by providing day care centers which offer preschool children a warm social environment, nutrition and medical care, and an educational program emphasizing cognitive development. The centers serve over 400 children ranging in age from 1 month to 6 years. The project seeks to involve parents as well, and many of the aides and teachers are themselves members of the migrant worker population. Success of the program is already evident in areas where it is operating: fewer children are being rejected from first grade or held back to repeat the early grades.

A "GRASS ROOTS" MOVEMENT

The NRO program is "a grass roots movement" among the Washington migrant population. In the fertile farmlands of western Washington, large crops of asparagus, sugar beets, potatoes, barley, and hops are harvested by migrant farm workers, who are mostly Mexican-Americans following the harvesting seasons of the

crops. In the heart of this area of migrating agricultural workers, Northwest Rural Opportunities operates nine day care centers for children, located in Quincy, Moses Lake, Othello, Pasco, Walla Walla, Whitstran, Sunnyside, Granger, and Toppenish, Washington.

Because of the constantly shifting locations of their work, migrants do not fit into the mainstream of the labor market; their language and cultural heritage are different from those of the majority of the population in the areas in which they move. Widespread poverty within the group often means that physical care and nutrition are inadequate. Most critical for their children, facilities for good day care and education are usually lacking. In an attempt to meet this need, a volunteer day care center serving 50 children operated briefly in Pasco, and in 1966 migrant groups and Latin American associations in the area joined together to obtain a grant from the Federal Office of Economic Opportunity to develop a more permanent program.

GOALS GEARED TO GROUP NEEDS

The present NRO program, which has its headquarters in Pasco, is centered around goals designed to meet the special needs of migrant families. For the program workers who come from the migrant group, goals include development of bilingual language

skills; progress along cooperatively developed career ladders within the program; advanced training in teaching, nursing, or social work; and eventual entry into mainstream employment. For the children, goals of the centers include providing medical and dental examinations, minimum daily nutritional requirements, and a preschool educational experience that will enhance their learning opportunities.

With the help of Federal funds and an organization called Washington Citizens for Migrant Affairs, large mobile trailers were purchased to house the day care centers. At first the centers operated as mobile units, but travel wear on the trailers proved to be costly and the centers are now established on a more permanent basis in the present nine towns. The various centers accommodate from 40 to 130 children each, serving parents who (1) have had more than one employer during the year, (2) receive at least 50 percent of their income from agricultural work, and (3) have a total income below the poverty level.

FACILITIES FOR PLAY AND LEARNING

The center in Pasco is typical. Composed of four large mobile units joined together, it is situated on a bare plot of ground near the railroad tracks. From the outside, the center looks

bleak and uninteresting; inside, however, the atmosphere is completely different. Divided into large main areas, brightly lit and colorfully decorated, the interior is surprisingly spacious and warmly comfortable. Everything inside is child-size, from the sinks and bathrooms at one end to the mirrors, tables and chairs, cabinets, and shelves around the rooms. The kitchen, presided over by a Mexican-American cook, fills the entire center with pleasing aromas. Each child has his own coat and shelf space, and the walls and even the support posts are covered with children's art. Every shelf is full of toys, books, and objects to encourage exploration and manipulation. Behind the center is a large fenced playground with swings and climbing equipment and a covered play area built of wood, each panel covered with brightly colored designs, animals, and flowers painted by a local Mexican-American high school student.

Five of the centers are equipped to take infants as young as 1 month old, and these centers have facilities for eight to 18 infants, each child having his own crib. Maintenance of healthy, sanitary conditions is stressed.

A LOCALLY DEVELOPED CURRICULUM

NRO has devised a curriculum based mainly on the work of Jean Piaget and on David Weikart's experimental approach in Ypsilanti, Michigan. The emphasis is on cognitive development. Since migrant children tend to be less verbal, because of their culture and their language difficulties (English is frequently a second language after Spanish), language development is a central focus of the curriculum. The curriculum was developed by Barbara Jessen, a doctoral candidate at Washington State University, in cooperation with educational consultant Beverly McConnell and NRO Child Development Specialist Louise Gustafson. It is divided into 18 units appropriate for children from 1 month through 5 years old. Suggested learning activities move from the motoric level to the representational and symbolic levels. The curriculum units include behavioral objectives and suggested activities to enable the student to gain new abilities. The child progresses at his own rate, moving on to the next unit as soon as he achieves the objectives of the preceding one. Teachers have found that each unit generally takes 2 to 3 weeks.

EMPHASIS ON LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Vocabulary is presented in four concept areas--classification, temporal relations, seriation, and spatial relations. Behavioral

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objectives for each area are pretested and posttested for each age group.

Teachers and aides are encouraged to interact verbally with children, even on the playground or during routine cleanup activities. Every situation is viewed as a potential talking and learning activity. For example, when putting away blocks, teachers do not simply say, "Let's hurry and get these put away." Rather, they are encouraged to allow plenty of time for such activities, to work and talk with each child as much as possible: "Put the long blocks here, the shorter blocks next to them, and the shortest blocks here next to the wall. Which is the shortest block?" Since the program maintains a teacher-pupil ratio of about one to six, such individualized instruction can occur frequently.

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES FOR BABIES

There is a carefully planned program for developing motor skills, concepts, and language for infants. For example, for babies of 9 to 20 months, a teaching strategy for naming explains how to get the child's attention on an object, stresses talking about the object and naming it frequently, and finally calls for getting the child to do something to the object, such as pick it up, point to it, or give it to the teacher. A more advanced

development of naming is used with children 20 to 36 months old: the strategy includes getting the child to repeat the name, do something to the object, and name the object when it is presented. The infant program is also individualized, each baby being given the Denver developmental test to determine what he can and cannot do and his program planned accordingly.

SPECIAL PROGRAM FEATURES

Activities at the center also include free play and pursuit time, during which children are able to use any of the materials available and to work individually or in small groups. Teachers and aides often participate and encourage the children in these activities, stimulating cognitive growth experiences whenever possible. A full range of nursery school materials is available--kits, books, blocks, flannel boards and chalkboards, puzzles, games, audiovisual equipment, and art supplies. In addition, some classrooms contain a set of Montessori button-and-buttonhole frames lined up on a shelf, graduated rings, and other Montessori equipment. While the center's curriculum especially emphasizes language growth, it is open and flexible; and teachers are encouraged to use all effective methods and materials to help children develop concepts and skills.

Another special feature of the curriculum is the prevalence of activities and materials dealing with the cultural heritage of Mexican-Americans. Teachers use filmstrips obtained from the Center for the Study of Mexican and Indian Education. In addition, a committee of representatives from each center has developed special materials appropriate for preschool children, which include games, directions, and a tape with songs and chants; ideas for center activities for the celebration of Mother's Day, Father's Day, and children's birthdays; two filmstrips--one depicting the Posadas and the other a child's birthday; and two flannel board stories--"The Blessing of the Animals" and "Carnival before Lent." Stories on "Cinco de Mayo," "The Sixteenth of September," and "The Sixth of January" are in the process of development. Costumes appropriate for the different dances and regions of Mexico are also available in each center, and future plans include making hand puppets to illustrate Mexican fairy tales.

HEALTH SERVICES

The NRO program is also concerned with health and nutrition as factors in child development. All children receive medical and dental examinations upon entering the centers, and the centers help to arrange for needed immunizations and medical treatment.

Much of the medical service is donated. In addition, a health check is held every morning and sick children are not admitted. There is an isolation room for those who become ill during the day. Anemia and malnutrition are common among the children entering the program; however, in the centers two meals and two snacks are provided each day. NRO participates in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child Nutrition Program and the Washington Donable Food Program, and all children receive minimum daily nutritional requirements.

A PROGRAM STAFFED BY THOSE IT SERVES

The program is supervised by two child development specialists, one largely responsible for curriculum, menu supervision, and teacher training, and the other in charge of records, administrative personnel, finances, and equipment. NRO also employs eight communications workers as "paraprofessional social workers." They are generally former migrant workers who are intimately acquainted with the problems of the migrant and seasonal farmworkers. All the communications workers are bilingual and have had intensive inservice training. In addition to informing the target population of the services available through NRO, they assist seasonal agricultural workers (who, unlike migrants, are based in one home for the major part of the year) to use services available to them

in the community. The program also employs a professional social worker who assists center personnel and communications workers in meeting the needs of the children enrolled in the center. For the five centers which enroll infants there is a nursing staff including a registered nurse on duty 16 hours per week and licensed practical nurses for the remainder of the time.

One of the goals of the NRO program is to provide training and work experience opportunities to members of the migrant population to make them more generally employable. About 70 percent of the program staff is from the target population. The migrant workers have a significant degree of control over the program through the advisory committees, one at each center. At least 51 percent of the members are parents of the children using the center. The advisory committee reviews all personnel employed by the center and selects the assistant teachers and aides.

Each center is staffed by one coordinator, who is preferably bilingual but not necessarily from the migrant group; one "head teacher," or head teacher, who has some professional training; and as many assistant teachers and aides as are needed to maintain a one-to-six teacher-pupil ratio at the center. The coordinator is concerned with management and administration of the center, and

the lead teacher trains and supervises the teaching staff as well as instructs the children. Assistant teachers and aides are generally selected from the migrant group on the bases of their potential as professional teachers and their ability and desire to work with children. They are trained as they work in the center and may advance to the position of a fully qualified teacher.

INSERVICE TRAINING FOR STAFF MEMBERS

An intensive inservice training program for the educational staff of the centers was begun by NRO in February 1970. Teaching techniques have been reduced to simple teaching strategies designed to complement the curriculum and stressing language development. Staff training workshops for key personnel, including the lead teacher from each center, are held every 6 weeks to 2 months. One or two strategies are introduced at each training meeting, using videotapes, microteaching, demonstrations, role playing, and lecture discussions. Participants train other staff when they return to their centers. After a practice interval, all teachers and aides are observed and evaluated twice. Six teacher educators, college trained in child development and education, work with the program. Four of these are VISTA volunteers. NRO is presently trying to gain college credit for those being trained,

the eventual goal being to establish a negotiable credential for persons trained in the program.

Other center personnel receiving inservice training are the cooks, usually from the migrant population, who participate in three or four workshops each year under the guidance of nutrition specialists from the Washington State Extension Service, Washington State University, and USDA; and new center coordinators who receive intensive inservice training during the first 2 weeks and attend monthly meetings of all center coordinators.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT INCLUDES VOLUNTEERS AND PARENTS

The day care program receives volunteer help in the classroom from Spanish-speaking students from area colleges. They act as part-time aides, coming to the centers each week to work with the children and provide additional language experience in all their activities.

In addition to parents, the advisory committee at each center is composed of representatives of the community at large. The advisory committee meets once a month and all parents are urged to attend. In addition to its duties in personnel selection, the committee determines operating hours of the centers according to

parent needs, makes recommendations for changes in the program, and arranges a monthly meeting for parents which may include discussions on such topics as public services available, adult education, and health programs; conversations with center teachers and aides; and plays and musical programs performed by the children, which are often illustrative of the Mexican-American cultural heritage.

Parents are always encouraged to visit the centers, and teachers take every opportunity to visit with parents when they bring and pick up their children at the center.

FINANCING CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

Actual incurred costs of the centers run about $9 per child per day. The 21 trailers which house the centers were purchased, equipped, and installed in 1967 at a cost of $10,000 per unit, but staff specialists estimate that this cost would be higher now. The trailers are on sites which are leased for a minimum amount. Funds to support the program include grants received from the Office of Economic Opportunity, the State education agency, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

EVALUATING CHILDREN'S PROGRESS

Children's cognitive growth is evaluated by pretests and post-tests for the behavioral objectives contained in every three units of the curriculum. Since the children work at their own rate, these tests are given when the children are ready for them. One goal for vocabulary development is that a child should learn four new words per curriculum unit. Testing data show that at least 87 percent of the 3-year-olds in the program are meeting this goal. The staff plans to use standardized testing also as a measure of overall program achievement. Pretest scores from the Caldwell Preschool Inventory have been low. The staff hopes that the post-test will reveal growth by children in the program. The Bayley Scales of Infant Development will be used to test infants at the centers.

Although a complete assessment of the program's success in meeting its long-range educational goals cannot be made at this early stage, there are strong indications that participation in the centers is having positive results for the children. From the center in Pasco, for instance, eight children entered kindergarten in 1967, having had no day care experience except for a few months as the center began operation. Of these eight children, five were retained in kindergarten the next year, a pattern generally typical among migrant children. In 1970, after 2 1/2 years in the

child development program, none of the 13 children entering kindergarten from the center had to be retained. Reports of improved performance in first grade are also being received.

What is the effect of the program for the migrant population as a whole? Again it is still too early to make a systematic evaluation of success in meeting NRO's long-range goals for migrant families and adults being trained in the program, but program officials point to progress of teachers-in-training and an extremely low attrition rate as indicators of a growing employment stability and upward mobility among these families.

PLANS FOR MIGRANT MINI-HEAD STARTS

The next step in NRO's planned program for migrant child development will be initiation of a "Mini-Head Start" program. Migrant children are particularly hard to serve in Head Start programs because they do not stay long enough in one place. In this program, a grant from the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and a Public Services Career grant will support an experimental research project designed to establish migrating Head Start programs. The project will train mothers who have recently "settled out" of the migrant pattern to be "mini-Head Start teachers," possibly in their own homes or in the camp areas. They will

receive 6 months of training to conduct Head Start classes for groups of six children each. Before, during, and after the training the mothers will be videotaped while working with children; the videotapes will be coded so that the growth in teaching skill of each trainee can be recorded.

Questions to be answered in the project are whether these women can receive sufficient training in 6 months to handle a small group of children; whether that amount of training will show measurable gains in the children; and what will be the amount of supervision necessary to assist the trainee to a successful Mini-Head Start operation.

If successful, this project will represent another step forward in the program to upgrade education for migrant families which has begun with the Migrant Child Development Centers.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Information about the Migrant Child Development Centers can be obtained by contacting Mrs. Louise Gustafson, Child Development Specialist, at the following address: Northwest Rural Opportunities, 110 N. Second Street, Pasco, Washington 99302

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MODEL PROGRAMS--Childhood Education

This is one in a series of 34 descriptive booklets on childhood education programs prepared for the White House Conference on Children, December 1970. Following is a list of the programs and their locations:

The Day Nursery Assn. of Cleveland, Ohio
Neighborhood House Child Care Services, Seattle, Wash.
Behavior Analysis Model of a Follow Through Program, Oraibi, Ariz.
Cross-Cultural Family Center, San Francisco, Calif.
NRO Migrant Child Development Center, Pasco, Wash.
Bilingual Early Childhood Program, San Antonio, Tex.
Santa Monica Children's Centers, Calif.
Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction, Salt Lake City, Utah
Dubnoff School for Educational Therapy, North Hollywood, Calif.
Demonstration Nursery Center for Infants and Toddlers, Greensboro, N.C.
Responsive Environment Model of a Follow Through Program, Goldsboro, N.C.
Center for Early Development and Education, Little Rock, Ark.
DOVACK, Monticello, Fla.
Perceptual Development Center Program, Natchez, Miss.
Appalachia Preschool Education Program, Charleston, W. Va.
Foster Grandparent Program, Nashville, Tenn.
Hartford Early Childhood Program, Conn.
Philadelphia Teacher Center, Pa.
Cognitively Oriented Curriculum, Ypsilanti, Mich.
Mothers' Training Program, Urbana, Ill.
The Micro-Social Preschool Learning System, Vineland, N.J.
Project PLAN, Parkersburg, W. Va.
Interdependent Learner Model of a Follow Through Program, New York, N.Y.
San Jose Police Youth Protection Unit, Calif.
Model Observation Kindergarten, Amherst, Mass.
Boston Public Schools Learning Laboratories, Mass.
Martin Luther King Family Center, Chicago, Ill.
Behavior Principles Structural Model of a Follow Through Program, Dayton, Ohio
University of Hawaii Preschool Language Curriculum, Honolulu, Hawaii
Springfield Avenue Community School, Newark, N.J.
Corrective Reading Program, Wichita, Kans.
New Schools Exchange, Santa Barbara, Calif.
Tacoma Public Schools Early Childhood Program, Wash.
Community Cooperative Nursery School, Menlo Park, Calif.

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